

Educator's Classroom Activity Book



Prepare Your Students for a Visit to Historic Fort Snelling



Lesson 1 - Early Minnesota & the Fur Trade

Archeologists believe the first humans entered this region between 12,000 and 9000 years ago. These people used the waterways for transportation, food, and to develop an extensive trade relationship with other native peoples. Trade items have been found along the entire Mississippi River. When the first Europeans arrived in the mid-1600s, the largest groups of American Indians living in the region that would become Minnesota were the Ojibwe and the Dakota. The Ojibwe primarily lived in the heavily wooded areas in the northern part of the region, while the Dakota called the prairies to the south home.



Wa-ba-sha, a Dakota Village
(Painting by Seth Eastman)



Ojibwe Canoe
(Painting by Eastman Johnson)

The first Europeans who arrived in the Upper Mississippi were French traders looking to exploit the region's abundant resources of fur-bearing animals. A fashion craze for fur felt hats in Europe led to a boom in the fur industry, and Europeans eagerly crossed the Atlantic in search of a greater supply of fur. First French, and later British, traders established friendly trading relationships between themselves and the American Indians they encountered. Many traders were welcomed into the tribes as family members (some even married Indian women, thereby strengthening their ties). Through these kinship relationships, traders and Indians benefited materially from each other; Indian trappers exchanged the furs they harvested for the goods the trader offered. The trappers and traders utilized waterways to transport furs and trade goods by canoe, first to the trading post, then to the east coast for processing.



Henry H. Sibley

The American Fur Company (AFC) was founded in 1808 by John Jacob Astor. The greatest competition to the company came from British and Canadian companies, such as the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company, but by the late 1820s the US government outlawed non-American trading companies within its borders, allowing the AFC to dominate the American fur trade. In 1834 Henry Hastings Sibley joined the company as regional manager for the Northwest Territory, making his headquarters in Mendota - across the river from Fort Snelling.

Read the previous page, *Early Minnesota and the Fur Trade*, carefully and answer the following questions.

1. When do archeologists believe the first humans lived in the region that would one day become Minnesota?
2. Who called this area home before Europeans arrived, and where did they live?
3. How did the Dakota and Ojibwe use the rivers and waterways of the Upper Mississippi Valley?
4. What first brought Europeans to the region?
5. How did European traders during the 1600s and 1700s interact with the Dakota and Ojibwe people in the region?
6. How were the rivers and waterways of the Upper Mississippi Valley used during this time period?
7. What was the name of the main American fur trading organization in the 1800s? Who was its representative in this region?
8. Name two competitors to America's fur trade interests in the early 1800s.

Lesson 2 - Trade Goods

Imagine that you are a fur trapper for the American Fur Company and about to set out for the winter to trap furs. Below are items you needed to buy on credit from the trader when you signed up to be a trapper, and a value key for the different kinds of fur you would need to collect. During the 1820s and 1830s, the currency of the fur trade was the muskrat and all items, from furs to guns, were valued in muskrats or “rats.” Using your math skills, answer the questions below each of the trade goods you have purchased on credit. Feel free to use the back of this sheet to solve the math problems.

1835 Fur Values Key

- 1 Bear skin = 7 muskrats
- 1 Beaver skin = 25 muskrats
- 1 Buffalo skin = 25 muskrats
- 1 Deer skin = 2 muskrats
- 1 Raccoon skin = 2 muskrats

Supplies On Credit

- 2 blankets = 25 muskrats
- 5 gun flints = 4 muskrats
- 1 trade gun = 120 muskrats
- 1 knife = 4 muskrats
- 1 fire steel = 6 muskrats
- 5 measures/gunpowder = 50 muskrats
- 1 kettle = 31 muskrats
- 1 axe = 20 muskrats



1 Brass Kettle = \$5.00



3 fire steels = \$2.88



1 axe head = \$3.20

How many rats is this kettle worth?

If you had one bear skin and one beaver skin, could you afford to buy the kettle?

How much does 1 fire steel cost in dollars?

How much does a fire steel cost in rats?

How many fire steels could you buy if you had 3 deer skins and 1 buffalo skin?

How many axe heads would you need to trade for a trade gun?

Lesson 3 - U.S. Expansion into the Northwest Territory

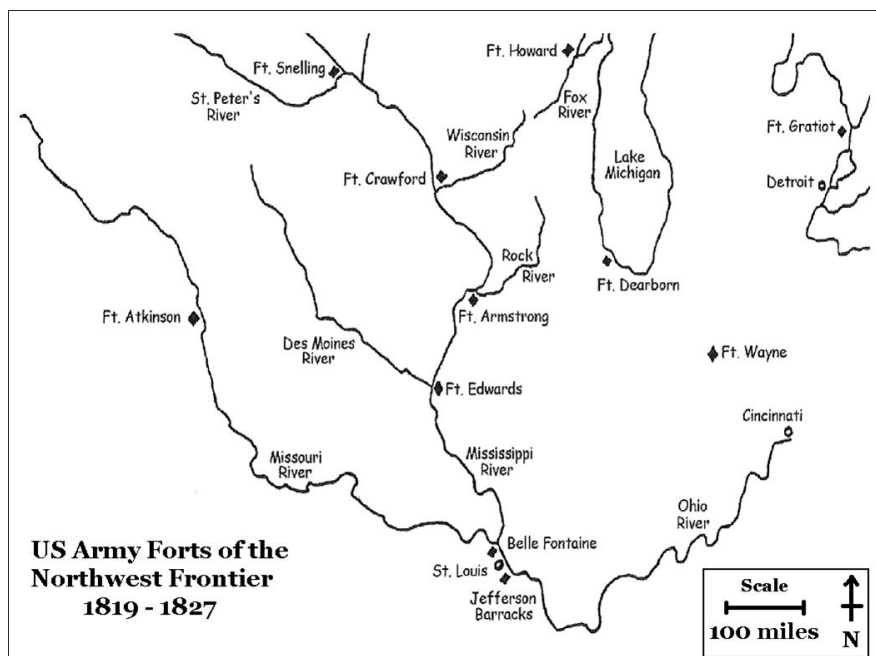
After the Revolutionary War (1775-1783) the United States began a series of expansionist actions in order to acquire more territory to the west. In 1803, President Thomas Jefferson made a historic purchase when he acquired approximately 828,800 square miles of land from France for a cost of \$15 million - known as the Louisiana Purchase. Overnight the United States doubled in size, and Americans were excited by the prospect of expanding the nation's borders from the Atlantic to the Pacific and eager to explore the new territories.



Lt. Zebulon Pike

In 1804 Jefferson sent the famous explorers Meriwether Lewis and William Clark to explore along the Missouri River all the way to the west coast. The following year Zebulon Pike was charged by General James Wilkinson to find the source of the Mississippi River. With several boats filled with supplies and soldiers, Pike travelled up the Mississippi valley to the junction of the Mississippi and Minnesota Rivers. There, he made an unauthorized treaty with local Dakota people for the rights to set up a permanent fort at the confluence of the rivers

The US government wanted to establish firm control of the region in order to neutralize British influence from Canada. To do this the army built several forts along important rivers and waterways to control trade and encourage positive relationship with the American Indians in the region. The map shows the locations of the forts built between 1819 and 1827. In 1814, future President Zachary Taylor established Fort Edwards at the junction of the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers.



Construction began on Fort Armstrong (at the Mississippi/Rock River junction) the next year, and Fort Crawford was established where the Wisconsin and Mississippi Rivers met in 1816. The largest of all was Fort Snelling, built on the land purchased by Pike in 1805. Lieutenant Colonel Henry Leavenworth arrived at the junction of the St. Peter's and Mississippi Rivers with a detachment of soldiers from the 5th US Infantry in 1819, and construction began on the fort in earnest the following year.

Read the previous page, *U.S. Expansion into the Northwest Territory*, carefully and answer the following questions.

1. How large was the Louisiana Purchase and how much did it cost the United States?
2. What were the names of the explorers sent out by President Jefferson in 1804 and what was their mission?
3. What was the name of the Army explorer sent by General Wilkinson and what was his mission?
4. Look at the map. What are the rivers a party of explorers would need to follow to get from Cincinnati to Fort Snelling? Name the cities and forts the explorers would pass along the way.
5. Write the names and dates of establishment of the forts along the Mississippi River north of St. Louis.
6. Using the map scale, estimate the distance from St. Louis to Fort Snelling.
7. What were two reasons the army wanted to establish forts in the Northwest Territory?

Interactive Supplement - How Big Was That?

Learning Objectives:

Students will simulate the living spaces of soldiers at Fort Snelling in the early 1820s with their own today. Students will be challenged to compare and contrast the notion personal space in the early 19th century with today and discuss the implications of this on daily life during this historical period.

Grade Level:

4th – 6th

Time:

Approximately 20 – 30 minutes

Materials:

Yard stick or Tape Measure

Tape (masking works well)

Large empty room to tape off spaces

Writing paper

Pencils or pens

Introduction:

During the 1820s, the soldiers at Fort Snelling lived in squad rooms in the barrack buildings. These rooms were 17 feet by 15 feet and each held one squad, a total of twelve men per room. Soldiers spent relatively little time in these rooms, since the majority of their time was spent outside working in fatigue details or drilling on the parade ground. Each room had 6 bunk beds, each bed measuring 3 feet wide by 6 feet long and two soldiers were expected to share each bunk.

These rooms seem cramped to us today, but they would likely have been considered quite comfortable by most of the soldiers in the 1820s. Ideas about privacy and personal space were different in the 1800s than they are today. It was common for more than one person to share a bed, especially travelers who rented bed space as opposed to rooms like they do today.

Procedure:

Squad Room

1. On the floor, mark the outline of a squad room (17 feet x 15 feet) in white tape.
2. Count out 12 students and ask them to step inside the square on the floor.
3. Tell the students to spread out inside the square and try to lay down in a comfortable position—remember, they cannot go beyond the outline of the room.
4. Ask the students how they feel about sharing such a small space with so many people—then ask if they can come up with some ideas of how to maximize the small space they are allowed (each soldier's personal space amounted to only 22 2/3 square feet).

Soldier's Bunk

1. On the floor, within the outline of the squad room, make another square (3 feet x 6 feet) - this represents the size of a soldier's bunk.
2. Have a student lie down inside the bunk outline and ask them to compare the space available to their own bed—remember, they cannot go beyond the outline of the bunk.
3. Tell the students that if they were soldiers in the 1820s they would be required to share their bed with another soldier. *If you and the students are comfortable with the idea, have two students lie inside the bunk outline side by side and have them figure out the most comfortable way they would fit.*

Conclusions and Follow Up:

Ask students to think about their living spaces today (i.e. bedroom, living room, recreation room, etc.) and how they compare to those of soldiers in the 1800s. After they have done the activity, have the students return to their desks think about how they felt about the experience. Ask the students to write down five adjectives to describe the squad room and soldier's bunk and compose a short paragraph about what it must have been like to live as a soldier on the frontier.

For a critical thinking exercise, ask the students to think of at least five ways that such small spaces could be useful to the army. Factors the students should consider: number of soldiers at the fort; supervision of soldiers; fuel consumption, heating the buildings, etc.

Extensions:

This activity can act as a supplement to study of U.S. military on the frontier, specifically the establishment of Fort Snelling. The other educational activities/worksheets in the Historic Fort Snelling Teacher's material can be completed in addition to this interactive activity to help students gain a more rounded understanding of the history of the fort and the people who lived there.

Academic Standards:

U.S. History

E. Growth and Westward Expansion

The student will demonstrate knowledge of western expansion, conflict, and reform in America.

1. Students will examine the processes that led to the territorial expansion of the United States including wars and treaties with foreign nations and Indian nations, the Mexican-American War, annexation, the Louisiana Purchase and other land purchases, and the removal of American Indians to reservations.



Reconstructed 1820s Squad Room and Soldier's Bunks at Historic Fort Snelling